

INTERNAL USE ONLY

28 June 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: D/DCI/NI

SUBJECT : FOCUS B Exercise

Duch —
1. The WE area has had three FOCUS B exercises in the last year and a half -- [redacted] exercise is scheduled for this year.

2. Our own experience suggests, fairly vividly, the following quick observations.

a. There is considerable merit in the idea, but as now conducted, the benefits get diffused by the way in which the process has been conducted. Typically, the seminars which the NIO chairs are considered useful by one and all. They improve communication between analysts in different parts of the forest, define problems and priorities better, and generally permit a desirable stock-taking on reporting.

b. Then things begin to lose focus. Under the ground rules, the NIO chairs but the IC Staff provides the rapporteur and subsequent action. Our experience is that the latter takes up to two or three months (!) to produce an acceptable statement of what the seminar concluded. By this time, momentum has been partly lost. It is further diminished in the slow movement of said statement through the IC Staff/HRC machinery -- which ultimately produces a letter for the DCI to the Ambassador. From beginning to end [redacted] this process required more than half a year. Problems and even Ambassadors (e.g., in [redacted] have been known to change as the wheels were slowly grinding on. The difficulty from the NIO point of view is that he gets associated with the project, but entirely lacks control over all but the first phase.

c. All this need not be so. I have read [redacted] memo to you on this subject, and agree entirely. Ringing in the Ambassador, especially, is an excellent idea. Beyond [redacted] suggestions, I would only urge that either the NIOs be put in clear charge of the process, from opening seminar to end product with the IC Staff/HRC in a well-defined support role; or else the latter take charge, with admonition to simplify and speed it up, and with the NIO serving only in an advisory capacity. At the moment, we have the worst of both worlds. In either

case, close consultation with the mission makes great sense, as does the two-way feedback principle.

d. Finally, the exercise should not be allowed to become too pretentious. Improvement in reporting will at best be selective and on the margin. (The mission in most cases is probably doing as well as it can on the main questions, or if it isn't, it won't be turned around by the Intelligence Community.) In general, this is probably one of those cases where modest improvements can be hoped for, where the process is more important than the product (i.e., the final letter), but where a cumbersome and portentous approach can do as much harm as good.



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